

**Summary of the
Proficiency Testing Committee Teleconference
March 10, 1998**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Tuesday, March 10, 1998, at 1 p.m. Eastern Standard Time (EST). The meeting was led by its chair, Ms. Anne Rhyne of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The principal purpose of the meeting was to discuss the status of Draft 2 of the National Standards, NIST Handbook 150-XX, and make committee assignments for action items from January 14, 1998.*

OLD BUSINESS

The minutes of the January 12, 1998, teleconference were approved with no changes.

MEETING IN DALLAS, TX MARCH 30-31, 1998

Ms. Anne Rhyne has sent out schedules to members of the Proficiency Testing Committee. She asked that committee members let her know by March 16, 1998, if they are unable to attend the meeting. Committee task assignments are listed below.

COMMENTS RECEIVED SINCE NELAC IIIi, 1/14/98

Ms. Rhyne reviewed the status of comments on the Proficiency Testing Standards received since January 14, 1998. Comments received from California have been summarized and distributed to the committee by Mr. Chuck Wibby. The comments received from North Carolina will be put into written form by Mr. Wibby and distributed. Additional comments were received from Ms. Peggy Ryker, a certification officer from Kentucky's Division of Water. These comments were mistakenly referred to as Ohio's comments in previous teleconferences. Kentucky's comments have been incorporated into Appendix E by Mr. Matt Caruso, along with comments received from the floor during the interim meeting. Comments have not been received from Mr. David Friedman. However, Ms. Lara Autry reported that his comments, which are reflective of the Office of Solid Wastes and Emergency Response (OSWER), have been circulated throughout the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for review. Mr. Friedman's comments are to be put into a tabular format (1-current wording, 2-revised wording, 3-explanation) similar to Mr. Wibby's summary of the California comments. It is possible the comments may be finalized by the end of the week. Ms. Autry said that she will let the committee know if she hears something about a change in schedule.

STATUS OF DRAFT 2 OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

The Draft 2 of the National Standards has not been received by the Proficiency Testing Committee yet. Mr. Wibby categorized three items of interest: 1) analytes, 2) concentration ranges, and 3) acceptance criteria. He proposed to do a side-by-side comparison of the concentration ranges once they come in from USEPA using a database containing historical

values. He may also evaluate the regression equations using USEPA's high and low values from the ranges. Once the comparison has been made, the Proficiency Testing Committee will be able to review the differences and make a list of analytes for which there are no national standards.

DISCUSSION OF NIST HANDBOOK 150-XX

Ms. Reenie Parris, of NIST, was asked what the committee can expect if they submit a list of analytes to be added to NIST's current list. She said that NIST may expand their list, but would need to see the requested list of analytes before responding. A committee member stated that Method 625 and 40 CFR, Tables 1A to 1E, were a good place to start. Ms. Rhyne volunteered to summarize the Proficiency Testing Committee's comments to Handbook 150-XX after the teleconference and submit them by email to Ms. Parris. Ms. Parris notified the committee that her primary contacts at USEPA were Mr. Bob Graves and Ms. Wendy Blake-Coleman. There is no formal relationship currently between NELAC and NIST. Ms. Rhyne will copy them on her email as well.

It was stated that a laboratory being tested can also be a proficiency testing (PT) provider. Ms. Parris remarked that the role of a provider involves more than quality assurance (e.g., maintain security, distribution, collection, reporting). She stated that she would like to make a list of things NELAC requires of the Proficiency Test Oversight Body (PTOB) that they do not see NIST as doing and evaluate those as well. NIST is descriptive in performance criteria, but does not intend to be descriptive in approach.

DISCUSSION ON APPOINTING A PTOB

It was stated in the teleconference on February 26, 1998, that there needed to be a formal mechanism for appointing a PTOB. The committee revisited the topic and was in general agreement of the need. It was asked whether this was an issue for the NELAC Board or the Conference, adding that it was not a USEPA issue. Dr. Ken Jackson agreed that it was not an issue for the USEPA, and stated that the Proficiency Testing Committee should make a recommendation and put it to the Board of Directors. For now, this will be resolved in Chapter 2. Mr. Matt Caruso will draft language for Section 2.2.3 (Major Groups and Responsibilities).

It is generally agreed that NIST will be the PTOB for Water Supply (WS) and Water Pollution (WP) analytes. A second or alternate PTOB may be necessary for Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), air, and other analytes. Ms. Rhyne will contact Mr. Peter Unger, of A2LA, in response to his memo proposing A2LA as an alternate PTOB.

It was discussed whether or not a provider should be able to select their oversight body, or if the Board would assign the PTOB. One comment was that by allowing overlap, there would be a duplication of fees and inspections.

It was pointed out that members of the Proficiency Testing Committee will change, and there should be a standardized way of reviewing PTOBs (e.g., forms, etc.). Dr. Jackson stated that at the start of year 1999, NELAP implementation will be a reality. The accrediting authorities will be approved. NELAC must have a program in place for water. A program for solid waste is

highly desirable, but can be postponed a year. Accrediting authorities are expected to adopt standards immediately, but realistically laboratories may not be accredited for another year.

REVISIONS TO CHAPTER 2 AND APPENDICES

Mr. Wibby recommended a few changes to Appendix D, relating to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and the PTOB. In Section D.2.1, it was agreed to change “Standard Operating Procedures” to “procedures”. Also, wording was recommended for the first sentence in D.2.1, “the PTOB shall develop and document as appropriate the procedures as necessary.” He recommended moving the last sentence of Section 5.0 to Section 8.0. Mr. Wibby’s recommendations will be submitted in writing to Ms. Rhyne.

In Section D.2.2 and D.2.3, there are references to time frames such as “90 days” and “14 days” to accomplish certain tasks. It was recommended that NIST review these time frames and let the Proficiency Testing Committee know whether or not they are reasonable.

ASSIGNMENTS

Ms. Rhyne made assignments to the committee members to revise Chapter 2 and its Appendices. The committee will meet on March 30-31, 1998, in Dallas to prepare for the NELAC Annual Meeting in June, 1998. The following sections will be revised, as needed, per the comments received just before the Interim meeting up until March 23, 1998:

- Chapter 2, Sections 2.0 through 2.3 -- Barbara Burmeister
- Chapter 2, Sections 2.4 through 2.7 -- Darlene Raiford
- Appendix A -- Tom Coyner
- Appendix B -- Chuck Wibby
- Appendix C -- Matt Caruso
- Appendix D -- Anne Rhyne
- Appendix E -- Matt Caruso

The committee will continue work on Appendices F and G. In the upcoming teleconference on April 21, 1998, the committee intends to devote some time to Appendix H on Air (Ms. Autry).

Other assignments were made to address the action items of the NELAC IIIi Proficiency Testing Committee meeting in Arlington, VA (January 14, 1998).

- Clarify use of terms, e.g., (NELAC, NELAP), within document and define any acronyms. -- Mr. Caruso
- Revise text to specify “calendar days” or “working days”. -- Mr. Faust Parker
- Resolve question of Accrediting Authority’s ability to select a single PT Provider for all laboratories within the state. -- Mr. Wibby
- Refer significant comments on accrediting authority actions to Accreditation Process Committee (Chapter 4) -- Mr. Wibby
- Add language to Section 2.2.3 (and any other applicable section) which describes how the NELAC PT Committee shall propose PTOB(s) to the Board. -- Mr. Caruso

Other topics for discussion:

- Frequency issues: number of studies per year, fixed schedule, supplemental studies
- Minimum number of data points necessary for a valid study (Chapter 2 currently says 20)
- National standards

ACTION ITEMS
Proficiency Testing Committee
March 10, 1998

Item No.	Action	Date to be Completed
1.	Mr. Wibby will summarize verbal comments received from North Carolina and distribute to the committee.	
2.	Mr. Wibby will do a side-by-side comparison of the concentration ranges from EPA's Draft 2 of the National Standards to historical values, once the standards are released.	
3.	Ms. Rhyne will summarize the committee's comments to Handbook 150-XX and email them to Ms. Parris, of NIST.	
4.	Mr. Caruso will draft language for Section 2.2.3, addressing the selection of a PTOB for NELAP.	
5.	Ms. Rhyne will contact Mr. Peter Unger, of A2LA, in response to a memo received from him.	
6.	The committee will revise sections of Chapter 2 and its appendices, as needed, per the comments received just before the Interim meeting up until March 23, 1998.	March 30, 1998 (meeting in Dallas)
7.	The committee will address other action items from the January 14, 1998 meeting (as assigned in the minutes).	March 30, 1998 (meeting in Dallas)

PARTICIPANTS
Proficiency Testing Committee
March 10, 1998

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